

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1                   1. A method of providing supply to a space platform, comprising:  
2           launching a supply canister into orbit using a launch vehicle, wherein the supply  
3           canister includes at least two docking ports and is adapted to allow for the at  
4           least two docking ports to be used simultaneously;  
5           docking an intermediate space vehicle to a first docking port of the at least two  
6           docking ports while the supply canister is docked to the launch vehicle element  
7           at a second docking port of the at least two docking ports, wherein the launch  
8           vehicle element is at least a stabilized component of the launch vehicle used to  
9           launch the supply canister into orbit;  
10          using the intermediate space vehicle to position the supply canister relative to the  
11          space platform; and  
12          docking the supply canister to the space platform while the intermediate space  
13          vehicle is attached to the supply canister.

1                   2. The method of claim 1, further comprising a step of pressurizing the  
2          supply cargo canister.

1                   3. The method of claim 1, wherein the stabilization provided by the  
2          launch vehicle is three-axis stabilization.

1                   4. The method of claim 1, further comprising signalling between two  
2          docking elements to facilitate a docking of the supply canister to a first of the two  
3          docking elements while the supply canister is docked to the second of the two docking  
4          elements, wherein such signalling passes through signalling extensions of the supply  
5          canister.

1                   5. The method of claim 4, wherein the first docking element is the  
2          intermediate space vehicle and the second docking element is the launch vehicle element.

1                   6. The method of claim 4, wherein the first docking element is the space  
2          platform and the second docking element is the intermediate space vehicle.

1                   7. The method of claim 4, wherein the signalling is passive radar.

1                   8. The method of claim 4, wherein the signalling is active radar.

1                   9. The method of claim 4, wherein the signalling is rendezvous signalling.

1                   10. A supply canister, usable in orbit, comprising:  
2           an internal space for containing supply materiel; and  
3           at least two docking ports adapted to allow for simultaneous docking of two  
4           elements,  
5           wherein the supply canister relies on a docket element to provide at least one of  
6           orbital stability and propulsion from one or both of the docked elements.

1                   11. The supply canister of claim 10, wherein the supply canister is an  
2           unpressurized canister.

1                   12. The supply canister of claim 10, wherein the supply canister is a  
2           pressurized canister.

1                   13. The supply canister of claim 10, wherein the supply canister has no  
2           means for propulsion while in orbit and no means for stabilizing the supply canister  
3           against rotation while in orbit and has means for connecting supply canister electrical  
4           system with an electrical system of an element docked at a docking port of the supply  
5           canister.

1                   14. The supply canister of claim 10, wherein the supply canister is  
2           approximately cylindrical and the at least two docking ports include one docking port at a  
3           first axial location of an approximate cylinder and a second docking port at a second axial  
4           location opposite the first axial location.

1                   15. The supply canister of claim 10, wherein the supply canister is  
2           approximately cylindrical and the at least two docking ports include one docking port at a  
3           first axial location of an approximate cylinder and a second docking port at a second axial  
4           location opposite the first axial location.

1                   16. The supply canister of claim 10, wherein the supply canister is  
2           approximately cylindrical and is shaped to support pressurization without concentrated  
3           stress points.

1                    17. The supply canister of claim 10, wherein the at least two docking ports  
2 include a first docking port at a first axial location of an approximate cylinder that is a  
3 Cone docking port and a second docking port at a second axial location opposite the first  
4 axial location that is a Probe docking port.

1                    18. The supply canister of claim 10, further comprising a power  
2 subsystem for supplying power to canister components.

1                    19. The supply canister of claim 10, further comprising a communication  
2 subsystem for communicating with elements docked to the supply canister or elements to  
3 be docked to the supply canister.

1                    20. The supply canister of claim 10, further comprising a rendezvous  
2 subsystem for assisting in automated or semi-automated docking of the supply canister  
3 with a docking element..

1                    21. The supply canister of claim 10, further comprising:  
2 a power subsystem for supplying power to canister components;  
3 a communication subsystem for communicating with elements docked to the supply  
4 canister or elements to be docked to the supply canister; and  
5 a rendezvous subsystem for assisting in automated or semi-automated docking of the  
6 supply canister with a docking element..

1                    22. The supply canister of claim 10, wherein the at least two docking ports  
2 include a first docking port that is a Cone docking port and a second docking port that is a  
3 Probe docking port, wherein the supply canister is adapted to be docked to an  
4 intermediate space vehicle at the Cone docking port and a launch vehicle at the Probe  
5 docking port simultaneously.

1                    23. The supply canister of claim 10, wherein the at least two docking ports  
2 include a first docking port that is a Cone docking port and a second docking port that is a  
3 Probe docking port, wherein the supply canister is adapted to be docked to an  
4 intermediate space vehicle at the Cone docking port and a space platform at the Probe  
5 docking port simultaneously.

1                    24. A supply canister, usable in orbit, comprising:

2 an internal space for containing supply materiel; and  
3 at least two docking ports adapted to allow for simultaneous docking of two  
4 elements; and  
5 pass-through signal means for passing signals between a first element docked to the  
6 supply canister and a second element to which the supply canister is to be  
7 docked.

1 25. The supply canister of claim 24, wherein the docking elements are an  
2 intermediate space vehicle and a launch vehicle element.

1 26. The supply canister of claim 24, wherein the docking elements are a  
2 space platform and an intermediate space vehicle.

1 27. The supply canister of claim 24, wherein the signalling is passive  
2 radar.

1 28. The supply canister of claim 24, wherein the signalling is active radar.

1 29. The supply canister of claim 24, wherein the signalling is rendezvous  
2 signalling.